

time for all of those months—or Secretary Blinken or Secretary Austin or the National Security Advisor? What were they doing while Afghanistan collapsed into chaos?

I think the facts suggest an answer. Rather than focusing on protecting Americans from the enemy, rather than focusing on getting Americans safely out of Afghanistan, they were focused on fighting a phony culture war that they invented and that appears to be their top priority.

Just consider: On June 11, when Secretary Austin was asked if he thought that the U.S. military was a fundamentally racist organization—this was at a hearing in the Armed Services Committee here in the Senate: Is the U.S. military a fundamentally racist organization?—he said: I can't give you an answer. And, instead, he talked about the military's urgent support for "equity"—his words. One week later, 21 districts in 9 Provinces had fallen under Taliban control in Afghanistan, and the Afghan Security Forces began to abandon their posts.

On June 21, Secretary Blinken announced the "Progress flag" would fly at the State Department, a special flag that celebrates, in Blinken's words, "diversity and intersectionality"—that famous catchphrase of critical race theory. The very next day, the Taliban seized the main Afghan trade gateway as the enemy's advance began to pick up pace.

On June 23, General Milley said in his testimony to the House Armed Services Committee: "I want to understand white rage." That is his quote. And he defended the administration's recent focus on White extremism in the military. The very next day, U.S. intelligence assessed that the Afghan Government would collapse within 6 months of our withdrawal.

On July 1, Secretary Blinken was busy changing U.S. passports to create new selections for nonbinary, intersex, and gender-nonconforming categories. The very next day, American troops withdrew from Bagram Air Base, what had been the hub of American power in Afghanistan, leaving it for the final time.

On July 14, Secretary Blinken invited the United Nations to formally investigate "the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia" in the United States. He invited the United Nations, that frequently corrupt body, to investigate his own country for racism, xenophobia, and racial discrimination. Meanwhile, at the very same time, even as Blinken spoke, the Taliban offensive was surging across Afghanistan.

On August 9, Secretary Austin was busy crafting a new, controversial COVID-19 vaccine mandate for all of our servicemembers. The very next day, U.S. intelligence officials warned that the Afghan Government would collapse within 90 days or sooner.

On August 17, Jake Sullivan—that is the National Security Advisor—said

that the Taliban were helping to provide "safe passage" for Americans fleeing Afghanistan. Well, one week later, the terrorist attack at Kabul left 13 American soldiers dead, at least 169 civilians wounded, and, shortly thereafter, hundreds of Americans left behind as our last transport lifted off.

Facts are facts. These are the facts, and they tell the story. Joe Biden and his team were more focused on their culture war than they were on protecting Americans. That is the long and the short of it. They were more interested in imposing a radical left social agenda than in getting Americans out of Afghanistan.

They were interested in using the military as a social experiment rather than respecting it as the warfighting institution it was built to be. Rather than making decisions that were sound in tactics and sound in strategy, Joe Biden and his team were aiming to please their radical, woke, progressive base. And the American people paid the price.

Now the American people deserve accountability for what has happened. They deserve accountability for the lives lost. They deserve accountability for the civilians killed, accountability for the Americans left behind.

And that is what this body is for. That is this body's responsibility. It may be an inconvenience to the Democrat leader; it may be an unwanted responsibility for supporters of the President; but it is our job nonetheless.

Americans have died. Americans have been abandoned. The Nation deserves an accounting, and it is not too much to ask the Senate to do its job. It is not too much to ask the Senate to get the truth, and it is not too much to ask the Senate to force accountability for this terrible crisis that this President has disgracefully led us into.

I can say, for my part, I will do everything I can to get that accountability, to get that truth, and to give the American people the answers that they deserve.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

NORTH KOREA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, with North Korea test firing ballistic missiles last week, you might ask: Where is the United Nations?

There are a series of international sanctions aimed at North Korea's nuclear program. These sanctions are in accordance with the U.N. Security Council's regulations passed in the wake of previous North Korea nuclear tests and ballistic missile tests. There is a U.N. Security Council Sanctions Committee on North Korea that is charged with monitoring these sanctions on North Korea.

The Wall Street Journal has reported that an expert panel working on a report for this U.N. committee has faced roadblocks from Chinese representatives, supported by Russia in some circumstances.

China and Russia supported these sanctions, but now they appear to be running interference for North Korea so North Korea can continue to violate the reason these sanctions were put on.

The expert panel is supposed to report the facts. And then by reporting the facts, they aren't representing national governments and shouldn't be representing national governments.

It is blatantly clear that the Chinese representative is doing the bidding for the Chinese Communist Party. The footnotes with dissenting comments are anonymous, but there is no doubt where they came from. In other words, China.

In one case, it is as petty as insisting that a reference to a company with "Taiwan" in its name should include an assertion that Taiwan is a province of China. That is something you hear from China all the time. Everyone knows China is obsessed with making others pretend that Taiwan is not an independent country.

That leaves no doubt where these objections are coming from. You can draw a very straight line back to General Secretary Xi. The bigger problem is that other objections seem designed to minimize and paper over the violations of these sanctions by North Korea. That is as good as confirmed by suspicions that China has been helping North Korea evade the sanctions that China supported in the first place and still claims to support.

General Secretary Xi probably thinks that letting North Korea run wild with its nuclear weapons program would cause problems for the West. And we all know that the West is very concerned about North Korea's developing of nuclear weapons and the ability to deliver.

General Secretary Xi is very shortsighted when he takes that view that he wants to cause problems for the West by helping North Korea, because it can't be in China's interest to have a nuclear-armed and unstable regime as a next-door neighbor, which North Korea is a nuclear-armed and a non-stable regime.

General Secretary Xi's strategy of sowing chaos is playing with fire. That is why all of this activity going on in the U.N. and China trying to cover up the violations of the sanctions is dangerous not just for the U.S. interests, but it is very dangerous for China and the world.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I spent those several weeks that we were away from Washington, DC, around Labor Day in Kansas, and, unfortunately, it is clearly evident that inflation has returned. Gas prices are up, prices at the grocery store are up, and further price hikes are on the horizon.

Unfortunately, price increases at the grocery store and at the gas pump and, really, everywhere else put the greatest